

HISTORY OF JOHANNES SONDEREGGER and BERTHA BUEHLER SONDEREGGER

Memories of a mother or grandmother are among the choicest of one's life. There are many grandchildren in our families that do not remember my mother and not one of them that had the opportunity of knowing my father. Even some of my brothers and sisters have no memory or a very slight one of father and not one of us knew a grandmother or grandfather as all of them spent their entire lives in their native Switzerland. There is always a feeling of sadness not to have known a father or mother or grandparent.

My father and mother were born in Switzerland. Both joined the L.D.S. Church in that faraway land, were baptized there and immigrated to Utah.

Father was born 30 Nov. 1830. He married his first wife, Anna Maria Lemp, in Switzerland on 29 Nov. 1857 and came to the United States in 1872. Both had been baptized in 1870.

My father bought an acre of ground in Midway and built a one room house. He and his first wife lived there for a number of years before Anna Marie died from typhoid fever. Then in 1878 he married mother. They too lived in this one room house but soon added another room. He shingled this little cottage which was the first house in Midway to have shingles. Father even made the shingles as they couldn't be purchased at that time.

Father was an expert stonecutter, mason and carpenter who found his skills in demand in the early history of Heber Valley. He worked as an artisan on the Salt Lake Temple for twelve years. He worked on the Wasatch Stake Tabernacle (now Heber City offices) during the entire time of its construction and also built the brick hotel at the old Schneitter Hot Pots which is now known as the Virginia House at the Homestead Resort.

When the first Midway Second Ward church was built, father constructed the cornerstone 4 April 1881 and helped build the church. Also he built three large stores in Heber City for John Turner Sr., a house for Jacob Probst near Huber's Grove, two large stores in Park City, foundations for several houses in Midway and various other structures.

Mother was born on 15 Aug. 1856. She joined the L.D.S. Church at the age of nineteen years and came to Salt Lake City alone. After being baptized in Switzerland her family became very bitter toward her and disowned her. A sister and her husband came to Utah a few years after mother came, her only relative in this part of the world. She received her schooling in Switzerland and spoke French and German very fluently.

Mother was 22 years old when she married and father was 48, more than double her age. She was left a widow at the age of 37 and 8 children to care for alone. Nine children had been born to them but a boy, George William, died at the age of 13 months.

Very briefly I have told of my parents births and early life. Now I would like to mention some of the unforgettable happenings and some personal glimpses that I can recall about them.

As my father died when I was just six years old, my memories of him are very limited. I do recall very vividly though an unusual experience. There were no automobiles when I was a child. Horses were used for pulling wagons and buggies. Many things could not be purchased in Midway or Heber so trips had to be taken to Salt Lake City for supplies they desperately needed. Father would drive his horses hitched to a big heavy wagon to Salt Lake City twice a year, in the spring and in the fall. He would purchase parts for farm machinery, parts for his grain binder, supplies and various other tools and household materials.

Each time he made one of these trips he would take two or three of us children with him as it became our turn to go. How we looked forward to this most exciting event! Our lives had very little amusement so to go to the "Big City" was an unusual happening. It took two days to travel to Salt Lake and two for the return trip. We'd camp for one night each way and sleep on the ground with mother's fluffy quilts under and over us. Our food was cooked on a bonfire usually. We'd stay in Salt Lake for a night or two and visit relatives. Father had a sister living there who was very good to us. She'd present each with gifts and some to give our brothers and sisters at home.

Both my parents were very industrious people--always busy at something. When father wasn't busy at jobs, he was operating a grain binder for people that wanted this service. In this way he earned additional income for his large family. Often he would be miles from home but always at noon he wanted hot food and regardless of the distance the children would carry the food to him in a large tin bucket.

It was a very tiresome job to walk and lug milk and hot food. Occasionally the bucket would fall or tip spilling some of the contents. My sister Bertha while on lunch detail spilled the milk. Worried about father not having his usual noon drink, she went to a farm house along the way and asked for some milk to fill the empty bottle. Father immediately knew that this wasn't our good clean milk and instructed all to never again beg for milk.

Father was a kind man, very understanding and sympathetic. He worked extremely hard to make life more pleasant for us. He built a large comfortable house that had many flights of stairs leading to the second story rooms. Our ceilings were different from other houses in that they were made of fancy grooved wood that we thought was very attractive. I can recall vividly the ceiling of mother's and father's bedroom with a beautiful star artistically and skillfully pieced together, a tedious and detailed job. Finally it was painted and varnished and appeared as a real work of art.

In order to work on the Salt Lake Temple and still maintain his home in Midway, father would walk over the mountains each weekend. He'd come home Saturday and return Monday. Imagine covering that distance after a week of hard labor! On one of these trips he came upon a large choke-cherry bush and stopped to pick and eat some. He heard a strange noise and walked around to the other side of the bush to investigate what it could be. To his surprise a large bear was eating and enjoying the berries on that side of the bush and father made a very hasty retreat on his way!

I have many memories of mother as she was both mother and father to us most of our lives. Fred, the oldest in our family was just 14 years old and Ernest a year old when father died. There were eight of us for mother to rear alone. She surely needed added strength and health to carry out her many responsibilities as a widow for over thirty years.

Some of my earliest recollections of our home was hearing mother tell about her early life in Switzerland. We loved to hear these wonderful stories. Often she'd sing songs and recite poems in her native tongue. We were taught the Swiss language and could converse with our parents and others. Mother loved to relate stories of her life as a girl and we were avid listeners.

Mother was a good homemaker in every possible way and we were taught economy in our home. Mother had a meager income after father died, but she always paid her tithing and was thrifty in every way.

She was truly a wonderful manager. A large vegetable garden was always planted near the fruit orchard. To tide us over the winter months our cellar was filled with potatoes and various other vegetables, a barrel of sauerkraut and many bottled and raw fruits. In a vacant room upstairs smoked meats were stored. These had been smoked in our smoke house which had been built especially for that purpose. A flock of chickens furnished us eggs and meat and our cows produced our milk and butter. Very little food had to be purchased, for we always lived within our income.

Honesty was an influence for good in the lives of her children for mother's values were lasting eternal values. She came here for the church she had joined in her native land. We attended Sunday School and Sacrament Meeting together as a family. She was proud of her membership in the church.

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness" was one of mother's beliefs. She was very orderly about her house and other buildings, gardens, etc. She was a tidy housekeeper and always neat and clean in her appearance. She took a great deal of pride in dressing herself and her children and looking nice.

We had such a sunny and cheerful kitchen. A large window on the south wall was always filled with various bright house plants especially geraniums and fuchsias. A tall oleander shrub like plant in a large wooden bucket had a choice spot by the west window. It bloomed once a year and was a mass of pink blossoms.

Working long hours was necessary for mother to accomplish the many household and outdoor duties. There were no modern conveniences. We lived before the days of automobiles, radios, televisions, talking movies, airplanes, automatic washers, dryers and refrigerators. Mother's washer was her washboard where she scrubbed by hand, then the white ones were boiled in lye water on the stove. The water had to be carried from the outdoor hydrant and heated on the coal stove. Mother's homemade soap gave forth a lye odor as it bubbled over and throughout the clothes. Our job was to stir the clothes as they boiled and occasionally raise them high out of the water to inspect the cleanness of them. When the clothes were whiter than white they were dipped out of the boiling water, rinsed in two or three different cold waters, some rinsed in a bluing water, and hung on the outside clothesline to dry.

Mother knew hardships and hard labor her entire life. Farming in early days meant back breaking labor. All of us worked on our two large tracts of acreage located several miles northeast of Midway in what is called the Dutch Fields. The girls worked along with the boys in hoeing the garden and harvesting the hay and grain.

Fred and Bertha, when just 14 and 12 years old, drove a team of horses with a wagon to Park City to sell produce such as potatoes and various other vegetables. They'd go from house to house peddling these things to supplement the family income. When the older children could be spared from farm work, they worked for others hoeing potatoes, doing household tasks, knitting gloves, stockings, etc.

My mother was a wonderful cook. I never tasted anything in my life that she fixed for us that I didn't like. I can recall how at Christmas time she'd make numerous tasty things like bratzelis made in a special iron brought from Switzerland, nine-mile cakes and a special braided bread. My mouth waters when I think of the apple fritters and foot-long smoked sausages. These she made from choice lean pork, even filling them with her special sausage machine. The smell of freshly baked bread and hot biscuits, baked regularly 2 or 3 times each week, still lingers in my memory.

Mother was also an excellent seamstress. She made everything that my sisters and I wore, and we always felt that we were as well dressed as any of our friends. We had an old treadle type machine that she used to sew countless yards of material into dresses, quilt tops, shirts for the boys and rags for rugs. She stitched patches on many pair of overalls and torn and worn dresses. She even made father's and the boys best suits.

When we were young Indians often came to our place begging for food, especially bread. We were always fearful of seeing them as we'd heard stories of people being killed by them and of mean squaws. When mother had an errand to make she'd warn us never to open the door when someone knocked for fear Indians might be there. On this particular day she had just baked 10 large loaves of bread still warm on the kitchen table. Contrary to mother's warning we opened the door when we heard some queer chattering. There stood several Indians in their bright shawls. They pushed their way into the kitchen, scooped up every loaf of bread and hurried on their way. We were too frightened to protest.

Mother was what you might call an angel of mercy. A knock in the middle of the night or a knock at the door in the early morning meant there was someone ill. We lived when there were no doctors or hospitals. Often people who had sickness in their homes would come for her and she would willingly get out of her warm bed to go with them and do what she could to help relieve pain as best she knew. Every mother had to be nurse and doctor and many people died from lack of professional help. There were no wonder drugs, no medications such as can be had today. Old family remedies were used.

On one occasion when mother answered a knock in the middle of the night a strange man asked her to follow him to the other side of town. During their long silent walk, the stranger trudged ahead with a cane-like stick in his hand, evidently to help him on his way. Finally they arrived at their destination, the home of a friend of mother's. She found a young man 23 years old in terrible pain and very ill. Any help was useless as he was beyond assistance and died a few hours later from ruptured appendix. The stranger was William W. Wilson who later became her son-in-law, husband of her daughter Bertha. Mother was called upon many times for sickness.

My sister, Louise, was kicked by a horse when a small girl, the result being a large cut on her forehead. While still unconscious, mother quickly and carefully used a sewing needle and thread to sew the gash. In later years one could not detect where the cut had been. I, too, was kicked by a horse on my chin. I knew I shouldn't have been so near the horse's heels and tried to hide my bleeding chin with my hand. Mother noticed my injury and placed a tobacco poultice on it to prevent infection. While binding grain father ran a binder needle entirely through the palm of his hand. Mother used her medicinal knowledge and it healed rapidly.

An outstanding quality of mother's character was her unselfishness. Strangers often came to the door asking for food and were never turned away. She gave food to neighbors and friends. Many that had come from her native country with families and were so poor they had very little to eat. She would send us children with fresh meat, sausage, bread, garden produce and pastry to supplement their meager fare. Often on holidays she would share her special food with them. She was always thought-

ful and concerned for their well being. Never did she expect or want words of praise for her good deeds.

Everyone considered it a privilege to sleep in mother's soft fluffy bed. She had two feather ticks, one under the bottom sheet and the other atop the bed. It was so light and yet so warm. How high and fluffy it appeared!

I can recall the lively horses she had to pull her shiny black buggy with its fancy top which protected one from the sun and storms. It really frightened me to watch her harness her two beautiful horses to the buggy. Prince was the spirited one and Fox was the other one, but of a more subdued nature. His name was derived from his color. She received much satisfaction from this convenient mode of transportation. Often she would visit us at our homes in Heber. On other occasions she'd have friends accompany her to visit other friends in the valley. She was always very self-sufficient and independent.

She had a good sense of humor, enjoyed music and all forms of entertainment. Even in her later and last years she kept busy with the same projects carried on throughout her life. She retained her industrious habits right to the end.

Mother and father were all these things and more to me.

Father passed away on 31 Oct. 1893 in Midway, Utah and mother passed away on 2 July 1924 at the home of her daughter, Minnie, in Daniel, Utah.

Written by Ida Sonderegger Anderson (daughter)
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